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TAGS: PREL SU CD LY KPKO ER SG UN

SUBJECT: ASMARA CONTACT GROUP MTG ON CHAD/SUDAN: READ OUT
FROM SRSG ANGELO

Classified By: ADCM: RGribbin for reason 1.4 b&d

1.(C) Summary. UN SRSG Angelo said the recent contact group meeting in Asmara on Chad/Sudan was "POSITIVE." The Chadian and Sudanese ministers were cordial, INCLUDING IN INFORMAL MEETINGS. Under considerable pressure from Libya and Eritrea, they agreed to exchange ambassadors prior to the next CG meeting scheduled for Ndjamenya probably in late October. The report to the CG on the creation of a border monitoring force was vague, yet participants pledged to begin depositing funds for it by November, with anticipated deployment next spring. Angelo said Senegalese and Eritrea ministers had a nasty dispute over force composition, with Senegal arguing for UN cover and Eritrea insisting on stand alone. Angelo opined that the CG proposal was doomed to fail prior to launching. End summary.

¶2. (C) SRSG Angelo briefed UNSC diplomats resident in Ndjamenya on the recent Contact Group meeting in Asmara. He characterized the event overall as "positive," and said that the tone, at least, of exchanges between Chad and Sudan was cordial. The two ministers seemed to get along, including in side-bar meetings. Under pressure from Libya and Eritrea - Angelo said the two delegations worked hand-in-glove with Eritrea being the spokesman - Chad and Sudan agreed to proceed with the actual exchange of Ambassadors. Libya overrode Chadian objections that Sudan was still arming, training and directing Chad rebel groups, even as it claimed to seek better relations. Libya threatened to withdraw from the CG if its demands for concrete results were not met. Chad and Sudan pledged to do this prior to the next CG meeting, which Eritrea formally requested Chad to host. Chad agreed and the meeting will take place after Ramadan and after the Francophonie summit in Canada. Angelo thought that would mean mid to late October.

¶3. (C) The second order of business was to plan for the establishment of the projected border monitoring force. Angelo criticized the report to the group regarding the force as "vague." He said it was clear on intent but without any scope of operations. Nonetheless, members of the Contact Group agreed to pony up \$10 million to be deposited in a trust fund beginning in November and another \$20 million later on. Angelo said that the ministers from Senegal and Eritrea exchanged emotional words regarding force composition. Senegal backed by Gabon and Congo, argued that the force might usefully accept international, i.e. UN expert assistance, whereas Eritrea insisted that it must stand alone - "No foreign PKOs." Apparently PM Issas also denigrated the Senegalese proposal saying that some nations (such as Senegal) only wanted UN money. Obviously, the group came to no resolution on the point. Angelo summed up giving his opinion that the CG operation was doomed. There was no concept, no financing, no sustainability and no management.

¶4. (C) Angelo said the Libyans distributed a detailed nine-point list which they said constituted the "Initiative of the Brother-Guide." It was not discussed, however.

15. (C) Comment: From our point of view, the Asmara meeting appears to have accomplished little. Although the exchange of ambassadors has symbolic value and does qualify as a "concrete" step, its substantive value is debatable. The Chadians hoped to secure some other Sudanese concession in return for resuming diplomatic relations. They might still work to get one before the next meeting. If the next CG meeting is held in Ndjamena, it could lead the parties to focusing more directly on the key bilateral issues, i.e. desisting from support for rebels. Unless Sudan takes some real substantive steps to reduce aid to the Chad rebels, the best that a CG meeting in Ndjamena may accomplish is to delay slightly the start of the campaigning season for the Chadian Rebellion, long promised for the end of the rainy season.

NIGRO